

Amendments to the Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for forming a ~~3D woven PI shaped cross section~~ preform having a first portion and a second portion at an angle to the first portion, ~~a first and second foot portions and first and second upstanding leg portions for use in a structure having the first portion being curved, at least one curved portion of a specific length,~~ the process comprising the steps of:

folding the first portion onto the second portion;

cutting the threads ~~treads~~ of the first portion for permitting the first portion to be curved without crumples; parallel to the direction of curvature into over a length equal to the length, such that the cuts in each thread are spaced from the cuts in the adjacent treads;

stretching the first portion;~~portions of the preform requiring curvature~~
unfolding the first portion off of the second portion; and
forming the first portion into a curve without crumples.

2. (cancelled)

3. (Currently Amended) The process as set forth in claim 1 ~~claim 2~~ including the step of impregnating the preform prior to the step of cutting the threads, ~~treads parallel to the direction of curvature into over a length equal to the length, such that the cuts in each thread are spaced from the cuts in the adjacent treads.~~

4. (Currently Amended) The process as set forth in claim 3 wherein the step of ~~stretching the portions of the preform requiring curvature are accomplished by forming a sine wave pattern in the portions of the preform requiring curvature.~~further comprises the steps of:

providing a first die and a mating second die, the first die and the mating die defining molding surfaces having a tapered sine wave configuration;

disposing the folded and cut first and second portions between the first die and the second die; and

closing the first die and the second die onto first and second portions.

5. (cancelled)

6. (new) The process of Claim 4 wherein the stretching step comprises the step of closing the first die onto the second die.

7. (new) The process of claim 1 wherein the threads are cut into the curved portion parallel to the direction of curvature over a length equal to the length of the curve, such that the cuts in each thread are spaced from the cuts in the adjacent threads.

8. (new) A process for forming a preform having a curved portion, the curved portion having a progressively increasing radius from a first edge to a second edge, the process comprising the steps of:

providing a stretchable preform;

stretching the preform with mating dies for progressively expanding the preform from the first edge to the second edge; and

shaping the curved portion of the preform without crumples.

9. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the curved portion is a foot portion of the preform.

10. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the curved portion is a leg portion of the preform.

11. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the preform is darted.

12. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the shaping step comprises the step of forming the stretched preform about a die surface having a final desired shape of the preform.

13. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the mating dies define molding surfaces having a tapered sine wave configuration.

14. (new) The process of Claim 13 wherein the stretching step comprises the steps of:

disposing the preform between the mating tapered sine wave dies;

aligning the inner radius to a small amplitude end of the mating tapered sine wave dies;

aligning the outer radius to a large amplitude end of the mating tapered sine wave dies; and

closing the mating tapered sine wave dies onto the preform.

15. (new) The process of claim 8 wherein the curved portion is in a plane, the stretching step is accomplished by stretching the preform out of the plane, and the shaping step is accomplished by shaping the curved portion into the plane.